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The President's Message.



The president's message, sent to the senate and house of representatives at the beginning of the second session, is important because it is the first state paper in which Mr. Roosevelt has been able to outline a policy. The message which he submitted at the first session of the present congress was written soon after President McKinley's death and before the new president had had time to fully acquaint himself with his official duties, and, therefore, could hardly present a complete and consistent plan for dealing with public questions. His last message, however, the important parts of which are reproduced elsewhere in this issue, is distinctly Rooseveltian in both thought and rhetoric. From a literary standpoint the message will compare favorably with the state papers of his predecessors.

The message deals with much that is non-partisan and such parts will be generally commended. As a rule, he is clearer in dealing with uncontroverted questions than in dealing with those where a definite opinion was both expected and desired.

He renews his recommendation of reciprocity with Cuba and defends it with vigor. He also commends arbitration as a means of settling international disputes, and points with a just pride to the fact that our country was the first to make use of the tribunal established by The Hague conference.

The advantages of the isthmian canal are briefly set forth, and the president seems to assume that the arrangements will be completed for the Panama canal as no mention is made of the alternative route through Lake Nicaragua.

Porto Rico is disposed of in less than fifty words—an evidence of the small place that a colony, when not in revolt, holds in the minds of those who administer an empire.

The Philippine question is considered more at length and he speaks boastingly of the progress made there. He asserts that we have "gone to the limit" in "granting rights of liberty and self-government." He compares our government with other "foreign powers" and insists that the Filipinos "enjoy a measure of self-government greater than that granted to any other orientals by any foreign power." He commends the "general kindheartedness and humanity of our troops," and claims that there have been few instances where so little wrong-doing has been indulged in by the victors in a war "waged by a civilized power against semi-civilized or barbarous forces."

While he nowhere discusses the principles involved in imperialism he uses the phraseology of those who regard government from the monarchical standpoint. To him the government instead of being a thing created by the people for themselves is a strong and commanding entity, entirely apart from the people, which "grants" privileges and even rights to those whom it desires to favor.

The doctrine that men are endowed by the Creator with inalienable rights—rights which the government did not give and cannot take away—and the doctrine that rights are gracious grants from a sovereign government to a subject people—the

difference between these two doctrines is so great that an ocean can roll between them. In fact, an ocean does roll between them, for the former doctrine is the American doctrine and the latter the doctrine of European empires. Because he considers the Filipinos better off than they were under Spanish rule or better off than most orientals are under oriental rule (he excepts the Japanese) he argues that American imperialism is a benevolent thing worthy to be eulogized. The president even takes pleasure in citing the fact that the Fourth of July, commemorated in this country because of the promulgation of the Declaration of Independence, was celebrated in the Philippines by the proclamation of "peace and amnesty."

The message gave him an excellent opportunity to announce and defend the theory upon which imperialism is based, but that would have required a moral courage and a political daring which neither Mr. Roosevelt nor any other prominent imperialist.

with the possible exception of Senator Beveridge, has thus far exhibited.

If the people are clearly in favor of the adoption of the doctrine of force as the true basis of government, why should there be hesitancy on the part of imperialists in clearly setting the fact forth?

In dealing with the tariff question, Mr. Roosevelt's message disappoints those who expected him to give encouragement to the tariff reform element in the republican party. He not only specifically opposes taking the tariff off of the trust-made articles as a means of attacking the trusts, but he advocates a higher tariff than the republican platforms have been in the habit of advocating.

The republican platform of 1892, adopted after the enactment of the McKinley law, declares that

"there should be levied duties equal to the difference between wages abroad and at home." But Mr. Roosevelt in his recent message says that there

should always be a sufficient rate of duty "to more than cover" the difference between the labor cost here and abroad. The word "more" which Mr. Roosevelt adds as an amendment to the most extreme policy heretofore advocated is a very indefinite word, and can be used by protectionists to justify any tariff however high. He has gone over bag and baggage into the ultra-protectionist camp, and will henceforth be "persona grata" with the great corporate interests that write tariff laws and then, hiding behind the bulwark they themselves have raised, plunder American citizens with high prices while they sell abroad in competition with the world.

If any further evidence were necessary to prove that he is not in the least tinctured with tariff reform it is to be found in his recommendation of a tariff commission composed of "practical experts" who "could approach the subject from a business standpoint, having in view both the particular interests affected and the commercial well-being of the people as a whole." Tariff revision by experts is only another name for no tariff revision, because the experts are men who profit by a high tariff, not those who suffer from it.

In the opinion of protectionists a man cannot become a tariff expert by purchasing protected articles, no matter how long he may continue at it, but he can become a tariff expert in a very short time by going into the manufacture of some article the price of which is enhanced by an import duty.

The Commoner takes great pleasure in commending the president's recommendation that anthracite coal be put upon the free list, but it is advised on the ground that it will have "no effect at all save in crises," and the service which it will render the people in crises is qualified by a "might." If the reduction will not affect the price of coal in ordinary times the protectionists may be able to forgive the president for making the recommendation.

His advocacy of reciprocity, when taken in connection with his high tariff views, means that we will not have reciprocity where it will do a foreign nation any good, and that, consequently, we cannot get reciprocity ourselves where it will be of any advantage to us. There must be mutuality in every trade, and if we only give a concession where that concession will be no advantage to others, we cannot expect in return a concession that will be profitable to us.

The president's position on the money question is all that the financiers could ask. He does not recommend any specific legislation, but carefully confines himself to broad and general statements which can be construed by the financiers into an indorsement of anything which they may desire to spring upon an unsuspecting public.

If the president attempted to point out any particular measure that he desired considered, discussion would at once arise as

to the merits of the proposition, but, as it is, he commends the banks as "the natural servants of commerce," and insists that

"as far as practicable we should place upon them the burden of furnishing and maintaining a circulation adequate to supply the needs of our diversified industries and of our domestic and foreign commerce." This is the phraseology of Wall street. "Place upon them the burden" is good. This would indicate that the public was trying to compel the banks to issue money for the benefit of the people, whereas the banks have done all the clamoring and have never yet been willing to present